

All you need to know about the Worcester Business Improvement District (BID)

Times are tough right now. Worcester needs to ensure that it remains competitive and does not lose business to neighbouring centres in the current economic climate. That's why a Business Improvement District (BID) has been proposed for part of the city centre. It's a simple, low-cost way to dramatically improve the environment in which your business trades – and give the city a competitive edge.

What exactly is a BID?

BIDs work by bringing together local businesses to work out exactly what projects and activities will add real value to the trading environment, and then deciding how much to spend on each. These projects are funded by businesses paying a small levy.

Your Business Improvement District

The BID proposed for Worcester will offer you the chance to take control of the issues affecting your bottom line. This is because it will generate £1.6 million over a five-year period for businesses to invest in improving the local trading environment.

However, the BID will only go ahead if it is approved through a secret ballot. For the BID to proceed, two conditions must be met: firstly, over 50% of businesses who vote must vote in favour and, secondly, those businesses voting YES must represent more than 50% of the total rateable value of all votes cast.

The BID will be funded by a 1.5% levy of the property's rateable value on businesses within the area, with a rateable value in excess of £7,500. For 60% of businesses, this will equate to less than £1 per day. Those in receipt of mandatory rate relief will then receive an 80% reduction. Premises within managed shopping centres that already pay a service charge will have a BID levy of 0.75% of their rateable value.

The BID will be run for you by the Worcester BID Board, which will operate as a wholly owned subsidiary of VisitWorcester and will comprise 15 members elected from businesses just like yours. This board will be responsible for the delivery of the projects, making sure they're delivered on time, on budget and to the highest standards possible.

When is this happening?

Now! You will already have received your ballot paper as these were sent to all relevant businesses before the end of September. You will have from 2nd until 30th October 2009, to post your vote.

You decide whether or not the BID goes ahead, and whether or not you take this unique opportunity to generate £1.6 million to invest in the city centre to make Worcester more attractive, increase footfall and improve business performance.

Read more about the projects that the Worcester BID proposes to deliver over the next five years.

The projects

Businesses, including your own, have been canvassed and, as a result, the BID has identified five key areas where improvements could be made. A range of projects have now been short-listed and stringently assessed against tight criteria.

Project 1: Spreading the word

This project is about marketing and promoting Worcester and the businesses within the BID area.

You said...

"We need to make Worcester a more vibrant destination with high-quality events and then tell people what we have to offer."

The BID will bring...

A structured, city-centre focused marketing strategy, plus a full marketing and communications campaign structured to increase footfall and spend; high quality events and street entertainment as well as specific promotion of the "independent" sector.

5 year budget: £500,000

Project 2: Safer city

This project focuses on making people feel safe whilst in the BID area.

You said...

"People need to feel safe and secure in Worcester city centre and we need to make sure they come back by giving them a pleasurable experience"

The BID will bring...

BID street rangers to liaise with businesses, report damage and assist visitors; taxi marshals; free membership of both the CityNet radio and Nightsafe scheme which aims to reduce anti-social behaviour.

5 year budget: £470,400

Project 3: Getting out and about

This project is about making sure the BID area is easier and more appealing to get around.

You said...

"We want a way around parking time restrictions, which curtail dwell time, monitoring of visitor numbers plus improved pedestrian signage."

The BID will bring...

A "pay for parking by phone" system which will allow cashless parking and allows people to top-up parking by mobile phone; smarter, new pedestrian signage and maps; initiatives for discounted parking for regular users; footfall monitoring in the BID area

5 year budget: £175,000

The projects continued...

Project 4: Attractive city

This project is about making Worcester a more attractive place to visit, for everyone, by funding projects in addition to those provided by the public agencies.

You said...

"We want a more attractive BID area for locals, businesses, clients, customers and visitors."

The BID will bring...

New Christmas lights, an improved Angel Place area; more greenery, the dressing of empty unit windows with vinyls; free or subsidised training courses for your staff

5 year budget: £137,400

Project 5: United voice

This project is about ensuring that the business community is aware of, and can lobby on, issues that affect you and the area.

You said...

"We want a greater say on key issues affecting your business, and the city as a whole, plus reduced overheads through bulk purchasing."

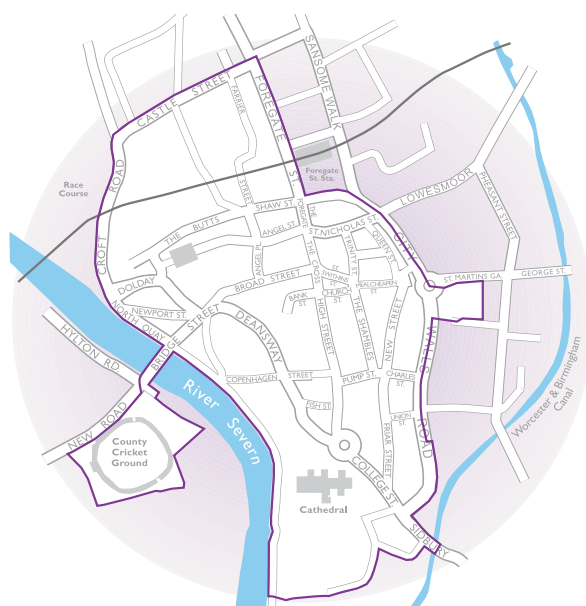
The BID will bring...

Assurance that your interests are represented on major issues such as planning, regeneration and traffic management plus bulk discounts through collective purchasing power such as insurance premiums

5 year budget: £10,000

The details

The Worcester BID covers the heart of the city centre and contains the main retail, office and leisure areas. The following streets are included in the BID area, either in full or in part. Businesses in these areas with a rateable value of over £7,500 will all contribute if the BID is approved.



The BID will cover the following streets

All Saints Road	College Street	Inglethorpe Court	Sidbury
Angel Place	College Yard	King Street	(not south/east of The Commandery)
Angel Street	Copenhagen Street	Lychgate Mall	South Parade
Bank Street	Cornmarket	Mealcheapen Street	South Quay
Bridge Street	Croft Road	Moreton Place	St. Martin's Gate
Broad Street	Croft Walk	Nash's Passage (New Street)	(St. Martins Gate car park only)
Castle Place	Crown Passage	Netherton Lane	St. Nicholas Street
Castle Street	Deansway	New Road (south side only)	St. Peters Street
Chapel Walk	Dolday	New Street	St. Swithins Street
Charles Street	Edgar Street	Newport Street	The Avenue
Cherry Tree Walk	Farrier Street	North Parade	The Butts
Church Street	Fish Street	North Quay	The Cross
Spring Gardens	Foregate Street	Pump Street	The Foregate
(Youth Centre only)	Friar Street	Quay Street	The Hopmarket
City Arcade	Friary Walk	Queen Street	The Shambles
City Walls Road (part)	High Street	Reindeer Court	The Trinity
Clare Street	Hood Street	Sansome Street	Trinity Passage
College Green	Hopmarket Yard	Severn Street	Trinity Street
College Precincts	Infirmary Walk	Shaw Street	Windsor Row

Size of business	Rateable value	Annual levy	Weekly equivalent
Small shop/office	£10,000	£150	£2.88 (a pint of beer)
Average shop/office	£20,000	£300	£5.76 (a paperback book)
Large store/office/bank	£50,000	£750	£14.42 (a new release DVD)

Frequently asked questions

Aren't BIDS just a way for Councils to save money?

Absolutely not. A BID scheme supports additional activity and does not and cannot replace statutory services carried out by the City Council, County Council, Police and other public agencies.

Isn't the recession a bad time to be developing a BID?

Actually this is a good time to develop a BID because it provides an opportunity for businesses to work together to drive down overheads such as insurance and utilities. It makes your money go further with larger marketing budgets and creates opportunities for economies of scale.

Why should I vote YES?

The BID offers a unique opportunity for businesses such as yours to shape and define the future of Worcester. You have invested your time, energy and hard earned cash in operating your business in Worcester and voting YES will give you the unique opportunity to make a difference to your trading environment.

Why are businesses with a rateable value of £7,500 and under exempt?

The cost of collecting the levy from smaller businesses outweighs the income generated from them. It also means that the number of businesses is reduced by over 400, meaning that we can communicate

with eligible businesses more effectively. Businesses under the threshold do not get a vote but can opt to make voluntary contributions.

Am I eligible to vote?

The person(s) registered company or organisation who is the ratepayer for non-domestic rates of premises within the Business Improvement District area will be eligible to vote. If the business is in joint names, a registered company or a charity/non-profit making organisation, the person nominated will be the only person entitled to vote.

What do you need to do now?

You, or your head office, will have received a yellow Worcester BID ballot paper which was sent at the end of September. You now have from the 2nd – 30th October to post your secret vote.

Remember it's your voice, your choice, so vote YES and ensure your voice is heard.

For more information on Worcester's BID please refer to your BID Business Plan. Please use the contact details below to request another copy.